

# The MIGHTY EIGHTH VOICE



**News from around 8th Air Force**

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## Sight Picture

### Character counts

In a sight picture released Feb. 11, Chief of Staff of the Air Force Gen. John P. Jumper discussed **character** as the foundation of Air Force core values and accomplishing the mission. Below is an excerpt from the sight picture:

The true foundations of character are: knowing the right thing to do and having a firm conviction and the courage to act on the knowledge.

The conviction requires solid moral fiber and ethical strength to do what is right even if no one is there to witness your actions.

Every airman has the responsibility, on and off duty, to reflect and enforce the Air Force core values of Integrity First, Service Before Self and Excellence in All We Do.

The responsibility for enforcing core values falls on every airman, not just on senior leaders and commanders. Failing to correct or report instances where rules are broken, selectively enforcing rules or turning a blind eye to marginal behavior or performance can perpetuate negative attitudes that can infect organizations.

Building character is a lifelong journey. Remember -- it is not just knowing the right thing to do; it is having the courage to do it.

Read the full text of the chief's sight picture on character at [www.af.mil/media/viewpoints/character.html](http://www.af.mil/media/viewpoints/character.html).

## Moeller takes command of 2nd BW

By Senior Airman  
Andrea Knudson  
*2nd Bomb Wing Public  
Affairs*

**BARKSDALE AIR FORCE BASE, La. --** 2nd Bomb Wing has a new wing commander following a change of command ceremony February 17 at Hoban Hall.

Colonel Michael Moeller accepted the guidon from Lt. Gen.

Bruce Carlson, Eighth Air Force commander and presiding official over the change of command from the outgoing commander Col. Floyd Carpenter.

Colonel Moeller comes here from the 5th Bomb Wing at Minot AFB in North Dakota, and Colonel Carpenter, a brigadier general select, will assume command of the Air Force Officer Accession and Training Schools at Maxwell AFB in Alabama.

Colonel Moeller, who served as the vice commander of the 5th BW, a major Air Combat Command unit and the host wing on Minot AFB, took to the podium after he rendered his first salute as the new wing commander and expressed how happy he was to become a part of the 2nd BW team.

"I cannot tell you how excited I am to be here today," said Colonel Moeller, who has three children with his wife Carol. "On and off base, it is clear that Carol and I couldn't have found a better place to live — the people, mission and area are already



**Colonel Moeller talks with local reporters following the change of command ceremony. (Photo by Airman 1st Class Trina Flannagan)**

number one in our hearts."

The 2nd BW has always been known as innovative airpower pioneers, said Colonel Moeller, who said taking command is both exciting and humbling. Addressing General Carlson, Colonel Moeller said, "Thank you again for this awesome opportunity -- I won't let you down. To the warriors of the 2nd Bomb Wing, it is a privilege to serve with all of you."

Colonel Moeller received his commission from the Air Force Academy in 1980. After graduation, he entered the Air Force's undergraduate navigator and electronic warfare training and specialized in flying the B-52 Stratofortress, first as an electronic warfare officer and later as an aircraft commander, instructor pilot and squadron commander.

Colonel Moeller has logged more than 3,500 flight hours. In addition to

● See **MOELLER**, page 4

# Leadership

## *Often undefinable but always essential to mission success*

**By Col. Marty Edmonds**

*552nd Communications Group Commander*

**TINKER AIR FORCE BASE, Okla.** -- What's leadership? There are as many answers as there are leaders. Some of the best answers are "I can't define it, but I know it when I see it" or "It depends on the person and the situation." Leadership is hard to define. There is no universal leadership recipe but there is universal agreement that good leadership is the essential ingredient to team success; military, commercial, civic or governmental.

I enjoy studying leaders and leadership. I read history and biographies. I listen to leaders when they speak at ceremonies and meetings. Occasionally, something inspires or convicts me and I write down a note. I am not a leadership expert but I have collected a set of guidelines that work for me. I hope you find them interesting.

### **Be Tough**

*Set high standards  
Have the courage to correct or chastise  
Don't tolerate incompetence  
Don't take things for granted  
Don't procrastinate the hard decisions  
Be on the offensive  
Take the initiative  
Have a vision of what must and should be done  
Get out from behind your desk  
Search out problems  
Avoid the trivial and find the critical path to success*

One of a leader's most important contributions to his or her team is priority. Decide which tasks deserve priority and don't allow daily pressures to make the decision for you. In his book *The Effective Executive*, Peter F. Drucker says "there are always more productive tasks for tomorrow than there is time to do them and more opportunities than there are capable people to take care of them—not to mention the always abundant problems and crisis." Drucker's description of what I call an "offensive" leader is one that picks the future over the past, focusing on oppor-

tunity rather than problems. Perhaps borrowing from our Air Force lexicon, Drucker says to aim high, at something that will make a difference rather than a safe or easy target.

### **Be Sensitive**

*Listen, communicate, recognize and empathize.  
Don't alibi. Just fix it. People make mistakes.  
The Air Force is a family—take care of yours!*

A few words on communication. As a Corps Commander, Gen. Colin Powell told his unit leaders, "You must command. To do so, you must control. To control, you must have communications." He was speaking of the free and timely flow of intelligence at all levels. Leaders cannot act before issues become problems without hearing and reaching every member of the team, through every level of supervision.

And a few words on family. Being sensitive extends well beyond the work place. Too many times, I will listen and empathize with people at work, only to go home and ignore my family. It is a common failing. At home, where I am most secure (with family), I am also least sensitive (to family). I serve my nation **for** my family. Their future as free Americans is why I do this. Taking care of my family, listening to them, caring for them is my job—yours too.

### **Be Honest**

*...as a leader; if you are nothing else, be honest.  
If you have only one leadership attribute, have integrity.*

I cannot define leadership in one paragraph but I can define integrity. Integrity is the willingness to do what is right even when no one is looking. It is the moral courage to do the right thing when that action is unpopular. Leaders are men and women of integrity. They are responsible for their actions and expect the appropriate credit or accountability. Leaders share credit with subordinates; they do not share blame.

### **Persevere**

*Persevere for excellence.*

● See **LEADERSHIP**, page 3

## *Training, supervision a must to carry on customer service*

By Col. Dennis Lange

8th Air Force Inspector General

**BARKSDALE AFB, La.** -- As a "senior" airman who entered the Air Force in 1966, I am continually reminded of the changes that have taken place. Changes in uniform appearance, advancement in science, technology, and weapons systems, and in organizational structure.

One area of change that is of concern to me is that of customer service. Interestingly enough years ago, gratuity was given as a reward and recognition for good service. Today, gratuity is expected.

I had a waitress follow me out of a restaurant once and ask why I did not give her the standard 15% gratuity. She was surprised when I said that the service was perhaps less than expected. I am critical of customer service perhaps because that was the way I was taught.

When my wife and I first arrived at Barksdale, we were very pleased by the exceptional service we received from the housing office and base billeting. But I am reminded occasionally, good customer service just doesn't happen, you have to work at it.

During a period of manpower reduction, we are encouraged to do more with less and you notice organiza-

tions cut back on products and services. As such, it is even more important today than ever that we as an Air Force protect one of our most important products, that of "good" customer service.

Where I see a lack of customer service, I attribute it primarily to a lack of adequate training and supervision. We must take the time to promote and advocate sound customer service practices to our employees. Regardless of who walks in our doors or calls on the telephone, they expect and deserve to be treated special. We must teach and practice customer service and accept nothing less.

The costs of providing "good" customer service is minimal but the costs of not rendering the same can be costly. We must all understand that customer service is a "basic term of employment."

Senior leaders must take responsibility for evaluating customer service within their organization as well as throughout the installation. When we see someone doing something right, we should let them know we appreciate their service.

At the same time, a flagrant lack of customer service should be noted and corrected immediately.

Customer service is about attitude, it reflects upon the organization and the Air Force.

### ● **LEADERSHIP, from page 2**

*Persevere with selfless devotion.  
Persevere with integrity.*

Sir Winston Churchill led his country through the most dangerous time in its history. After Dunkirk and through the Battle of Britain, the fate of his nation was in peril but his leadership was resolute. Late in life, Sir Winston Churchill addressed the preparatory school he attended as a boy. The headmaster told the boys, "This is an historic moment. Winston

Churchill is the greatest speaker of the English language. Write down everything he says. He will make an unforgettable speech." Churchill rose, approached the microphone, peered over the top of his glasses, and said: 'Never! Never! Never! Never! Give up!' ...and he sat down.

Leadership isn't measurable. It doesn't fit in neat bins or common character traits. One solution does not suit all leaders or all situations but there is benefit in studying leaders and trying out their style. Mine is not original, but it works for me. Use it as you wish. Go lead!

### **The "Mighty Eighth" Voice**

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**Eighth Air Force Commander**  
Lt. Gen. Bruce Carlson

**Chief, Public Affairs**  
Capt. Denise Kerr

**Deputy Chief, Public Affairs and Editor**  
2nd Lt. Jennifer Ferrau

● **MOELLER, from page 1**

the B-52, his aircraft-flying list includes the B-1, T-37 and the T-38.

During the ceremony, General Carlson acknowledged the importance of the change of command and the accomplishments of Colonel Carpenter and the 2nd BW saying, "This is a momentous occasion — it's a privilege to participate. 2nd Bomb Wing is truly a wing that is 'second to none.'"

The 2nd BW commander is responsible for maintaining the wing in a state of constant readiness to carry out bombardment operations on a global scale. The commander does this by ensuring the organization, training and equipment of a combined active-duty and civilian force of more than 5,400 people assigned to the wing.

Additionally, General Carlson presented and pinned on the Legion of Merit award to Colonel Carpenter.

Colonel Carpenter, who took command of the 2nd BW in July of 2002, led the wing through history-making events, to include operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, the wing's support of the Article 32 hearing for the Canadian friendly fire incident and the Columbia shuttle disaster.

Colonel Moeller said he could not thank Colonel Carpenter enough, "His leadership, energy and focus in peace and in war have made an incredible difference." He also wanted to send the colonel and his wife Melissa off with the best of wishes for their next journey.

After the ceremony, distinguished visitors, local media and other attendees witnessed the unveiling of the 2nd BW flagship B-52 with Colonel Moeller's name on it.

Colonel Moeller called the B-52 the "world's greatest war machine" and said he "can't wait to fly it!"

## Preparing for high flight



**SOUTHWEST ASIA** — Staff Sgt. Jeremy Randal secures an aircraft tow hitch to a U-2 Dragon Lady here Feb. 5. The U-2 is a high-altitude, multi-intelligence reconnaissance aircraft that can fly above 70,000 feet. The jet provides near-real-time imagery and signals intelligence to warfighters and national authorities. Sergeant Randal is a crew chief with the 380th Expeditionary Aircraft Maintenance Squadron and is deployed from Beale Air Force Base, Calif. (U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Brandi Branch)

## 8th IWF wraps up inspection

**By Master Sgt. Michael Callis**  
*8th Information Warfare Flight*

**BARKSDALE AIR FORCE BASE, La.** — The 8th Information Warfare Flight successfully completed its first Unit Compliance Inspection conducted Feb. 10-12.

The 8th IWF is a geographically separated unit of the 67 Information Operations Wing located within the 8th Air Force Air

and Space Operations Center. It is responsible for integrating influence operations, network operations and electronic warfare into air campaigns as part of the 608th Air Operations Group and the Eighth Air Force Air Operations Center.

The Air Combat Command Inspector General Knights Team, led by Col. John M. Carter, Jr.,

● **See INSPECTION, page 6**

A fond farewell to **Col. Chuck McGuirk**, 2nd Bomb Wing vice commander and his wife **Terry**, as they head off to Hurlburt Field, Fla. Colonel McGuirk will take command of the 505th Command and Control Wing.

### Aerospace Warrior Attitude



**Airman 1st Class Selena Dumbacher**

**Assignment:** 8 AF Commander's Administrative Staff

**Years of service:** 2 1/2

**Hometown:** Paducah, Kentucky

**Family:** 3 brothers and 2 sisters

**Job title:** Information manager

**Primary duties and responsibilities:** I track a majority of the performance reports, decorations and other documents that come in for the commander's signature.

**Most rewarding job aspect:** I've met a lot of people who are great mentors and wonderful to work with. I'm learning a lot!

**Goals:** I just want to do my job the best I can and live my life one day at a time.

**Hobbies:** Road trips, eating out, going to Starbuck's and singing along with every song on the radio.

**I'm most proud of:** Myself, for making my family proud and for making it "on my own" at such an early stage in my life.

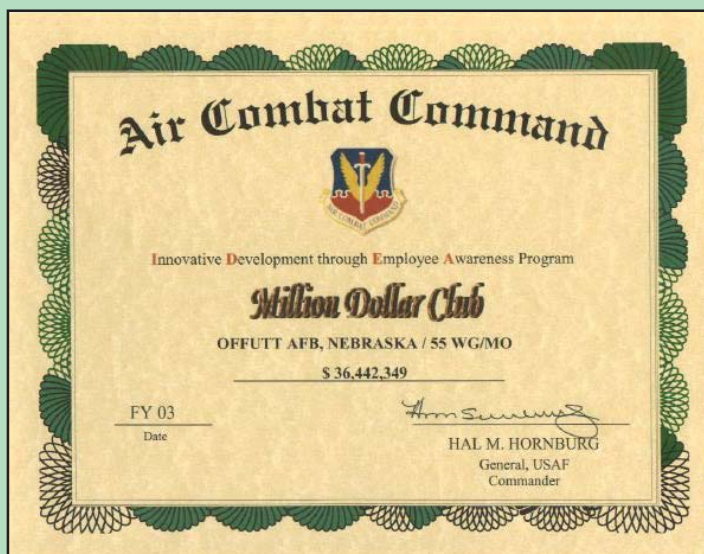
**My best asset:** I get the job done. If I don't know the answer, I try to find it instead of saying "I don't know" or passing it off to someone else.

### Great Idea!

The Air Combat Command Million Dollar Club recognizes ACC installations credited with more than \$1 million in first year net savings through the ACC Innovative Development through Employee Awareness Program (formerly known as the Suggestion Program) during Fiscal Year 2003. The ACC IDEA Program saved \$42.8 million, which is 27 percent of the total savings Air Force-wide.

Four bases are credited with 84 percent of ACC's total savings and one of the four was the Mighty Eight's own Offutt AFB, Neb.

Achieving a level of \$1 million in savings is a source of pride for team members who recognize that in times of budget constraints, they have made a significant group contribution maximizing scarce resources.



## Welcome to the "Mighty Eighth"

*The following people joined the Headquarters 8th Air Force team between Jan. 9 - Feb. 17, 2004:*

Staff Sgt. Andy Burnett

1st Lt. Warren Dedrick

Senior Airman Keith Derrick

Senior Airman Cherish Dew

Staff Sgt. Joshua Halliday

Airman 1st Class Richard Holder

Airman 1st Class Andrew Kampa

Senior Airman Turnbull Karym

Airman CHad Nabinger

Staff Sgt. David Ninesing

Airman 1st Class Alexander Saucedo

Airman 1st Class James Warrington

Senior Airman Kanika Wilson

Master Sgt. Georgina Yates

608th Air Communications Squadron

608th Air Support Staff

608th ACOMS

608th Combat Plans Squadron

608th ACOMS

26th Operation Weather Squadron

608th Air Intelligence Squadron

608th ACOMS

26th OWS

26th OWS

608th CPS

26th OWS

608th AIS

HQ Standardization and Evaluation

# Tinker unit takes top maintenance honors

## 552 AMXS wins ACC award for fourth straight year

**Staff Sgt. Andy Stephens**  
552 ACW Public Affairs

**TINKER AIR FORCE BASE, Okla.** -- The 552nd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron can tell you a lot about pride. Their motto, "We Deliver Airpower," became a proven fact when they were recently named the 2003 winner of the Air Combat Command's Maintenance Effectiveness Award for the fourth year in a row.

"I am so proud of these dedicated, hard working maintenance and support professionals in earning this prestigious award," said Lt. Col. Frank R. Heinsohn, 552nd AMXS commander. "With over 400 first-term airmen, 200 of whom are in 5-level upgrade training at any one time, this award is a fitting

testament to their professionalism and patriotism and the sustained superior leadership of our officers and NCOs. I'm clearly the luckiest guy around to command this exceptional squadron."

In 2003, the 552nd Air Control Wing flew 23,400 flying hours without mishaps over the course of more than 2,600 sorties. Prior to Operation Iraqi Freedom, it had been projected that the

**In 2003, the 552nd Air Control Wing flew 23,400 flying hours without mishaps over the course of more than 2,600 sorties.**

552nd ACW would fly approximately 1,600 sorties. Securing Iraqi airspace consumed parts and resources, but the squadron not only met the demands of the rapid operations tempo, the mission capable rates soared to unprecedented levels, ensuring that Airborne Warning and Control Systems were available to

other warfighters. The increase of 9 to 10 percent over the last five years represents hundreds of personnel not only performing well, but also perfecting their work practices and actually improving the maintenance system. Following continuous deployments in support of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, the lieutenant colonel said the squadron was reorganized into three Aircraft Maintenance Units and continued to fly another 400 sorties in the first two months of the post-war reconstitution.

"We saw how important teamwork was to getting a job done," said 1st Lt. Holly Krievans, 552nd AMXS section commander. "The maintainers made sure safety was also involved in all aspects and that every aircraft was ready to fly."

During 2003, 17 aircraft were deployed at any given time on average

● **See TINKER , page 7**

## ● **INSPECTION, from page 4**

evaluated the 8th IWF to verify the unit's compliance with public law and Department of Defense, Air Force and ACC directives. The inspectors validated the unit's level of compliance with 58 Critical Compliance Items, contained in 13 separate Compliance and Standardization Requirement Lists. Inspection areas included personnel management, security, com-munications and information, logistics, operations and training.

Of the areas inspected, the unit showed 45 in compliance, 13 in compliance with comments

and zero non-compliance items, resulting in a 100 percent compliance rating. This inspection resulted in the first IWF to have zero non-compliant areas. Prompting the Inspector General team leader to say, "This unit is light-years ahead of other IWFs for operations procedures and

integration in the Air and Space Operations Center."

The unit commander, Lt. Col. Robert Morris, said he was "extremely pleased by the teamwork and professionalism his unit showed to the inspectors." This thought was echoed by the units' parent command, the 67th Information Operations Group at Lackland AFB, Texas. Chief Master Sgt. Gary Parks, 67th IOG superintendent sent the following congratulatory message to the men and women of the 8 IWF, "Great job! These are the best UCI results I've seen in my 29 years in the Air Force."

**The IG team recognized the following people for their superior performance during the inspection**

**8 IWF Training Team**  
1st Lt Gregory R. Roberts, 8 IWF/DOS  
2nd Lt. Jesus Diaz, 8 IWF/DOO  
Tech Sgt. Sterling C. Kent, 8 IWF/DOS  
Staff Sgt. Jason L. Graves, 8 IWF/DOZ

● **TINKER, from page 6**

during the height of hostilities for Operation Iraqi Freedom, but the maintainers at Tinker Air Force Base continued to support E-3 aircraft tasked for ongoing Operation Noble Eagle missions. With 100 percent utilization, the maintenance personnel labored through long hours to keep the E-3 fleet flying.

“With OIF happening last year and all the jets back at Tinker for the first time in AWACS history,” said Capt. Doug Dodge, 552nd AMXS Blue Aircraft Maintenance Unit Assistant Officer-in-Charge. “That really marked 2003 as significant and we were able to capture the scope of those accomplishments in this award. We did some pretty significant things both here and in the desert that really set us apart from other organizations within ACC.”

Some of those accomplishments include setting and maintaining a mission-capability rate that is more than 10 percent above the ACC standard. The 552 ACW and its component squadrons also supported five

contingencies and 14 combat exercises in FY 2003, maintained a 100 percent on-time take off on-station rate, managing a 200 percent increase in home station aircraft in less than four weeks, then tripling CONUS sorties, and supporting three areas of responsibility with a \$2 million program that controlled more than 40,000 fighter and bomber sorties.

Lieutenant Krievans said the squadron had the right mix of hard work, dedication and teamwork. Supporting personnel back at the squadron kept regular contact with the family members of their deployed coworkers to make sure they were well while their loved ones served in OIF.

“If you’re in this squadron, nobody sits on the bench,” she said. “It takes every person in this squadron, no matter what your job is, no matter if you’re a crew chief or if you’re handing out the tools or if you’re working on the commander’s support staff, every single person has an equally important role.”

Captain Dodge said the award proves that the 552nd AMXS is one of

the premier maintenance organizations in the ACC today.

“We won for the medium aircraft category at ACC level, but we’re competing against all the other units now,” said Captain Dodge. “Winning this award would mean we are the best in the Air Force at getting those jets off the ground. The award encompasses such a broad spectrum of areas from maintenance. The 552nd AMXS puts those areas together every day.”

The 552nd AMXS won the Air Force-level award in 2001. Senior Airman Richard Davenport, a crew chief for the squadron, said the award is a reflection of the tight integration between crew chiefs, specialists, and squadron administration. During 2003, he was deployed in support Operation Southern Watch.

“Every day you’re in a deployed location, you do a full inspection of the aircraft before and after every mission because you can’t afford to take any chances,” he said. “Everyone works together to get that aircraft flying. For us, knowing that we got a jet in the air is the greatest feeling ever.”



**The 552nd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, which provides worldwide maintenance and deployment of the E-3 Sentry, won the Air Combat Command Maintenance Effectiveness Award in the medium aircraft category for the fourth consecutive year. (Courtesy photo)**

## 509th Medical Group fills decontamination gap

By Master Sgt. Dee Ann Poole  
509th Bomb Wing Public Affairs

**WHITEMAN AIR FORCE BASE, Mo.** — The 509th Medical Group's Homeland In-place Patient Decontamination Team equipment will fill a decontamination gap identified after the 2001 anthrax scares and Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

Whiteman is the first small clinic in Air Combat Command to receive the decontamination equipment. Master Sgt. Randy Harris said the equipment will be used in response to a hazardous materiel or weapon of mass destruction incident.

"Statistics show that 60 percent of patients seen after a

HAZMAT or WMD event won't arrive at the clinic by ambulance. Instead, they'll be walk-ins or worried well patients and we won't know their decontamination level," Sergeant Harris said. Upon notification of a possible HAZMAT or WMD event, the clinic will lock its doors and patients will process through the decontamination unit before entering the clinic. "This ensures the MTF doesn't get contaminated, causing a shut down of the medical response element," he said.

The eight-member decontamination team wears TYVEK suits and powered respirators while lifting and moving litter patients. Therefore, 24 people are required to operate the unit to accommodate work-rest cycles. Up to 10 people can be decontaminated in one hour.

## New law replaces SSCRA, protects servicemembers

By Army Sgt. 1st Class Doug Sample  
American Forces Press Service

**WASHINGTON (AFPN)** — A new law replacing the Soldiers' and Sailors' Civil Relief Act of 1940 provides servicemembers greater protections to handle personal financial and legal obligations, officials said.

"The focus of the (new act) is the same as under the SSCRA: To provide protections to servicemembers who have difficulty meeting their personal financial and legal obligations because of their military service," said Lt. Col. Patrick Lindemann, deputy director for legal policy in the office of the undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness.

This is significant, because it clarifies and updates SSCRA provisions and adds some protections. "Servicemembers on long-term deployments, or called to active duty, should not have to worry about their families in their absence being evicted from their quarters without sufficient legal protections, or that they are paying on a leased car or apartment that they can't use, or about civil legal proceedings they can't attend because of their deployment," he said.

"These are some of the situations the SCRA covers so that servicemembers are able to devote their energies to the military mission and the defense needs of the nation, and not on civil matters waiting for them at home," he said.

An automatic 90-day stay of civil proceedings upon

application by the servicemember is what Colonel Lindemann called "a significant change" in the new act. This applies to all judicial and administrative hearings. Previously, stays were discretionary with the courts.

The new relief act also makes it clear the 6-percent limitation on interest rates for pre-service debts requires a reduction in monthly payments, and any interest in excess of 6 percent is forgiven, not deferred, Colonel Lindemann said.

The SCRA also expanded the protection against eviction. Under the SSCRA, servicemembers and their family who entered into a lease for \$1,200 or less could not be evicted without a court order. This amount is increased to \$2,400 and added an annual inflation adjustment. For 2004, the maximum will be \$2,465, significantly increasing the number of servicemembers entitled to this protection, Colonel Lindemann said.

The new relief act also gives the servicemember who has received permanent change-of-station orders or who is being deployed for 90 days or more the right to terminate a housing lease with 30 days' written notice. Before, servicemembers could be required to pay for housing they were unable to occupy.

One of the more significant new provisions is an added protection for motor-vehicle leases. Any active-duty servicemember who has received PCS orders outside the continental United States, or who is being deployed for 180 days or more, may terminate a motor-vehicle lease

The law prohibits early termination charges.

"Now, servicemembers won't have to pay monthly lease payments for a car they can't use," Colonel Lindemann said.

# Making history

## *917th Wing signs up first female B-52 pilot*

By 2nd Lt. Torri White  
917th Wing Public Affairs

**BARKSDALE AIR FORCE BASE, LA.** -- With a positive attitude and determination, 1st Lt. Heather Pearson made history in the Air Force Reserve. She became the first female B-52 aviator to serve in the 917th Wing when she joined the 93rd Bomb Squadron in 2003.

"Flying is awesome; I wouldn't want any other job," said Lieutenant Pearson. She has taken aviation to the third generation which started 50 years ago with her grandfather, Clem Pearson. He earned his wings which he passed to his son, Lt. Col. Keith Pearson in 1980. He then passed them on to Heather upon her graduation from Pilot Training in 2003.

After completing her first year at Louisiana State University, Heather decided to pursue her interest in flying.

"She was more on the modeling track...that kind of stuff. When she told me she wanted to start flying airplanes, it kind of set me back," said Colonel Pearson. "But at the same time, if that is what she wanted to do, then I gave her the plan that she needed to do it."

After expressing these thoughts to her father she found herself enrolled in flying lessons the next day.

Pearson continued to attend LSU and devoted her summers to flying and received her private license in the summer of 1998, instrument rating the next year,

then finally her multi-engine license a year later.

"Once I had completed all the civilian ratings I wanted, I began looking at different Guard and Reserve units for a flying slot," Pearson said.

"I was hired by the 93rd during my senior year at LSU."

She completed a degree in finance in May 2001 and was immediately off to Officer Training School for three months.

"At the time of all the training, it seemed like the hardest thing I had ever done, like it was never going to end, but it did end and was definitely worth all my hard work and

effort," Heather said. After 12 months of pilot training, she had 14 short days to relax until her B-52 training began.

"My first B-52 ride was quite an eye-opening experience," Pearson recalls. She was familiar with one-hour flights and was now going to be on board for up to 10- hour flights. Heather said she was ready to accept the challenge.

"It was very different than anything I had ever flown, and the



**First Lt. Heather Pearson sits in the pilot seat prior to take-off. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Sherri Savant)**

first time I landed, I felt pretty powerful," Heather said. She credits her success to the loved ones around her. "My father has always been there to guide me and answer plenty of questions."

Pearson gives the following advice to other future aviators, "If I had one thing to say to anyone that might want to pursue a flying career, I would say go for it. Stick to it no matter how hard it seems at times, because it is worth it!"

# Two sisters reflect on patriotism, military life

By Airman 1st Class Katie Booher

5th Bomb Wing Public Affairs

**MINOT AIR FORCE BASE, N.D.** -- Two sisters living half a country apart working completely separate jobs find the military tie that unites them may be the strongest bond they have.

Master Sgt. Mary Mercado, 5th Bomb Wing career assistance advisor, says the closeness she shares with her sister, Army Staff Sgt. Jodi Renner, is quite unlike any she feels with her other six siblings.

"Every time we get together, we swap stories," Sergeant Mercado said. "Out of all eight [brothers and sisters], we have a unique bond because of our military service. My four brothers and two other sisters don't share the same sense of patriotism and military discipline like Jodi and I do."

Sergeant Renner is a full-time firefighter in Alexandria, Va. As an Army Reservist, she teaches Reserve Officer Training School students at George Mason University, Va. Even though they serve in different branches of the U.S. military, she and her older sister share a common kinship beyond most sisters.

"There is an unwritten understanding between Mary and me," Sergeant Renner said. "That understanding stems from our shared military experience."

Even though Sergeant Mercado has served 19 years in the Air Force, she remains a bit envious of the Army's physical training commitment.

"The Army focuses extensively on physical readiness and I'm a little jealous of that," said the master sergeant. "The Air Force is quickly getting there, but I have always admired the way the Army is able to meet their goals and mission objectives by being physically ready."

Meanwhile, her soldier sister said she wishes the Army had better training environments.

"I like the fact that the Air Force mentally prepares its airmen to be ready," Sergeant Renner said. "I look at your classrooms and student barracks, and it's completely different from some of the academic settings of the Army."

Sergeant Mercado works at Minot's Professional Development Center. In the center atrium are seven display cases that feature artifacts from seven eras in military war. One case is devoted to Operation Enduring Freedom to the present. On Sept. 11, 2001, Sergeant Renner's fire station was one of many that responded to the Pentagon when it was hit. Before a recent visit to Minot, Sergeant Mercado asked if her sister had anything she would be willing to



**Army Staff Sgt. Jodi Renner and her sister, Master Sgt. Mary Mercado, 5th Bomb Wing career assistance advisor, look at a photo of Chief Warrant Officer William Ruth, a pilot who died during the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. (Photo by Airman 1st Class Katie Booher)**

donate for display in the OEF case.

"We talked about it, and she said she had a few sentimental items she'd like the school to have," Sergeant Mercado said. "The neat thing is that [the rescue] was a joint operation between the firefighters and the military. The firefighters frontloaded [the effort] and the military came in to finish the job."

Sergeant Renner said she donated items directly related to the Sept. 11, 2001, tragedy because she was there and because the attack started OEF.

"I donated bracelets of people who died at the Pentagon and World Trade Center; I also provided a photo of Chief Warrant Officer William Ruth, a pilot for the 104th Air Ambulance Company who perished in the Pentagon. He and I were crew members together for the Maryland National Guard before I joined the Army Reserves," Sergeant Renner said.

Even though her younger sister joined the Army, Sergeant Mercado is proud of her choice to serve.

Although the siblings may not agree on where to live or what military branch to serve in, they agree their father, retired Lt. Col. Theodore Renner, taught them the most valuable lesson they know.

"[He said] hard work and persistence are traits of a successful person," Sergeant Mercado said. "Those are character traits Jodi and I strive to live by in each of our respective services."

## Present Arms

*Staff Sgt. Patrick Heston, 552nd Air Control Wing, Tinker Air Force Base, Okla., participates in an honor guard exercise practicing the firing party sequence. (Photo by Airman 1st Class K.L. Kimbrell)*

